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ABSTRACT

Based on interviews and document analysis, an evaluation of Year 3 of the Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership (CAECP) assessed its initiatives to help youth and young adults advance their educational and workplace achievements in pursuit of satisfying, productive careers. CAECP improved school-based learning activity objectives by making available career information materials and software; maintained a large roster of speakers; conducted a regional career fair; and promoted credit articulation, curriculum development, academic credit for summer internships, and summer internship evaluation procedures. CAECP surpassed performance targets for almost all these work-based learning activity objectives: educator participation in industry visits; student job-shadowing; work-based student learning experiences; and employer participation in activities. CAECP met many of these key connecting activity objectives: strengthened ties with and built upon CAECP's success; developed and deepened linkages between institutions and curricula; and developed a marketing strategy. CAECP did not do well eliciting the participation of more employers and teachers in career development opportunities. Recommendations regarding the continuous operational challenges CAECP faced included the following: continue work to reduce the divide between academic core/college orientations and career and technology tracking; promote strategies that help school districts recruit and retain certified, skilled instructors; and promote development of an automated information management system. (The interview list and guide are appended.) (YLB)

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Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership School-to-Career Grant: An Assessment of Year Three Activities

February 2001

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I. Overview

This report presents results of an independently contracted evaluation of activities and services delivered under the School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 (PL 103-239) by the Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership (the Partnership). School-to-Work activities (known as "School-to-Career" in Texas) are provided largely through 27 existing regional School-to-Career (STC) Partnerships operating in the 28 Local Workforce Development Areas with funds provided by a five-year federal grant administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC).[1] The Partnership has received four successive one-year grants from TWC to implement School-to-Career activities in Travis County. As part of the Year Four (SFY 2001) grant, TWC required grantees to arrange an independent evaluation of their Year Three (SFY 2000) activities that included recommendations for program improvements. This report is in response to that requirement.

Approach

Researchers conducted an evaluation of Year Three (September 1, 1999 through August 31, 2000) activities based on interviews and document analysis, continuing the approach taken in the Year One and Year Two Evaluation.[2] The evaluation assesses the accomplishments, constraints and prospects of Partnership initiatives designed to help youth and young adults advance their educational and workplace achievements in pursuit of satisfying and productive careers.[3] It does so by probing the experiences and perceptions of employers, educators and other collaborators in the STC effort.[4]

Interviews. Researchers conducted two rounds of informal, but structured in-person and telephone interviews with stakeholders. The first round, conducted between February and March 2000, occurred in the midst of Year Three activities; the second round took place during the month of February 2001. (Attachment A contains a list of those interviewed.) Both rounds probed the accomplishments, constraints and related issues

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[1] The five-year federal grant awarded to Texas totaled $61.3 million. The Year Three allocation for the Capital Area was $430,094. By comparison, the total Year One allocation was $381,831 and the Year Two allocation was $440,000.

[2] O'Shea, Daniel P. and Christopher T. King. March 2000. *Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership School-to-Career Grant: An Assessment of Early Accomplishments, Constraints and Prospects* (Austin: Center for the Study of Human Resources, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, The University of Texas).

[3] As in the earlier evaluation, the assessment is limited by the lack of available data, as well as resource and time constraints. The challenges of evaluating School-to-Career initiatives in general are well recognized; see Robert W. Glover and Christopher T. King, "Net Impact Evaluation of School-to-Work: Desirable but Feasible?" in USDOL, *Evaluating the Net Impact of School-to-Work: Proceedings of Roundtable* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

[4] The evaluation is limited in scope and does not include an analysis of the impacts of STC participation or its benefits and costs, which along with this present process evaluation would usually comprise essential components of a comprehensive evaluation.

with individuals positioned at various points in the regional STC configuration. Interviewees included the Partnership director, the director and employees of the Capital Area Training Foundation (CATF, the Partnership's principal contractor), school district liaisons, instructors, employers, employment trainers and mentors, as well as individuals with associated organizations (e.g., the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce and Education Austin).[5] These interviews were supplemented by site visits to schools and training centers, as well as attendance at STC-related meetings, including industry-sponsored seminars for educators, Industry Sector Steering Committee meetings, a CATF Board meeting, and a school-based Foundation meeting.

Document Analysis. Researchers reviewed annual Partnership planning documents, budgets, contracts, management reports and evaluations, as well as education and training materials, brochures and marketing materials, as available.[6] These documents provided a general understanding of the STC initiative and its outcomes in the Austin region. Additionally, they provided a basis for developing an interview protocol to examine key features, accomplishments and challenges facing the regional STC effort.

Interview Guide. The interview guide featured an array of topical questions designed to elicit experiences from multiple perspectives. (See Attachment B.) Individual discussions drew from appropriate subsections of the guide depending on the interviewee's position within the STC configuration and their professional expertise. Topics targeted for general discussion included:

- Goals and Objectives
- STC Activities
- Resources and Resource Allocations
- Partnerships/Collaborative Configurations

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[5] Students are the targets of a comprehensive, longitudinal survey by the Texas State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee.

[6] Presently, the National School-to-Work Office is preparing to release an assessment of the Texas STC grant based on August 2000 site work. The Partnership's fiscal agent, the Capital Area Workforce Development Board, prepared a monitoring report of the Partnership and CATF in October 2000. Three earlier statewide reports of School-to-Careers in Texas have also been released: *School-to-Careers Activities in Texas: A Status Report* (Austin, TX: Texas Workforce Commission, January 1999); Elizabeth Dimmitt, *Texas Career Progressions: Exploring Career Advancement for the 21st Century* (Austin: Texas State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, n.d. [1999]); and ImpactDataSource and the Technology and Economic Development Division at Texas A&M University, "Linking School-to-Careers with Economic Development: A Report on the Economic Impact of School-to-Careers in Texas," (Austin, TX: Texas Workforce Commission, November 1999). TWC contract monitors also issued a November 1999 draft report regarding the Partnership, "A Review of the Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership" (Austin, TX: TWC). Texas SOICC is also conducting a longitudinal survey study that will assess the impacts of STC on participating students. In June 2000 TWC awarded a contract to Texas A&M university to evaluate the statewide STC effort.

- Recruitment/ Retention in Career Pathways
- Recruitment/ Retention in Industry Sector Steering Committees
- Outcomes

Within these topics, the guide also engaged several key themes articulated in the Years One and Two evaluation, including:

- Strategic Approaches
- Systemic Practices
- Sustainability
- Vocational Education Stigma
- Student and Teacher Bottlenecks and
- Accountability/ Continuous Improvement

Organization of the Report

The remaining three sections of the report present the evaluation results. Section II discusses the accomplishments of the Partnership in attaining its stated annual objectives as found in the planning/reporting matrix that the Partnership submits to TWC (and which also serves as the annual work statement for grant purposes). Section III provides a broader overview of the Partnership's accomplishments, as well as persistent constraints that the regional, collaborative and voluntary approach to STC faces. The final Section IV provides recommendations for the Partnership regarding more immediate operational considerations.[7]

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[7] O'Shea and King (2000), *op. cit.*, offered broader recommendations for actions regarding strategy, system-building, sustainability, and accountability/continuous improvement in the context of changing labor markets and rapid technology developments that remain pertinent to STC in and beyond Central Texas.

II. Year Three Objectives and Outcomes

For Year Three grants, TWC provided a planning matrix for STC objectives that grantees were required to complete and submit as part of their application.[8] The matrix also serves as a monitoring tool for TWC and a performance management tool for the Partnership. The statewide use of the common format and terminology of the matrix is designed to assist TWC and the 27 local partnerships in systematically planning, monitoring and managing STC.

According to the most recent matrix, the Partnership attained or exceeded almost all of its stated objectives. The CAWDB monitoring report also indicates that the CATF met or exceeded performance targets in the eleven objectives for which it had primary responsibility.[9] Tables One through Three present a truncated version of the TWC reporting form covering the period January-June 2000. They indicate the Partnership's key objectives for Year Three, their performance targets and outcomes.[10]

Before discussing the Partnership's achievements *vis a vis* objectives stated in the matrix, two conditions should be recognized. First, several of the Partnership's and CATF's objectives are notably absent from or under-represented in the matrix. These will be mentioned at appropriate places in the text.

The second is broader in nature, yet more important in terms of measured outcomes. Texas STC participation for local areas, schools districts, schools and students is completely voluntary and student participation requires parental consent. The substate grant application contains assurances "that STC activities shall only be implemented if there is strong local school board control, complete student choice, and informed parental consent."[11] Almost all of the objectives that fall short of their mark are largely associated with ISDs and students choosing not to adopt materials or participate in activities as a matter of local or personal choice. For example, only three local ISDs chose to issue academic credit for summer internships this past year. Also, all of the school districts in Travis County accepted career interest and aptitude materials from the partnership, but these were not distributed to or used by nearly half of the students for whom they were targeted. Similarly, a few districts (e.g. Round Rock ISD) already have career planning

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[8] Originally, the Partnership had established a series of annual objectives in its principal program areas for the five-year federal grant period, which it adjusted annually to reflect the actual and anticipated status of the STC project in Travis County.

[9] Crawford, Cheryl. October 2000. *Monitoring Report: Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership and the Capital Area Training Foundation.* (Austin: CAWDB).

[10] Career Awareness, a separate program activity area in Years One and Two, is subsumed under School-Based Learning Activities in the Year Three reporting matrix.

[11] TWC. March 1999. *Year Three Substate Implementation Grant Application.* Austin: TWC. P7.

procedures in place, and have no desire to adopt the Individual Academic Career Plan (IACP) promoted by the Partnership.[12]

School-Based Learning Activities

The Partnership sought to continue to expand and improve many career awareness and school-based learning activities initiated during previous years, including making available career information materials and software to participating ISDs. The partnership began a new career awareness approach this year, opting to support a series of four-page inserts in the Austin American Statesman in lieu of reprinting the series of career pathway brochures made available to students and schools in the previous year.[13] These inserts, which described career preparation and occupational options in industry sectors, reached a broad audience of students, parents and employers. Thousands of additional copies of these have been made available to schools.

CATF continues to maintain a large roster of available speakers and the regional career fair—with 2600 students present—vastly exceeded attendance expectations. The fair exposes students to career options and provides a venue for initiating summer internship contacts. The large student turnout also may stimulate continuing employer participation.

Key school-based activities included promoting credit articulation, curriculum development, academic credit for summer internships, and summer internship evaluation procedures. The past year, the Partnership, continued working with Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium (CATPC), to secure articulation agreements between local colleges, particularly in the areas of software/computer sciences and health sciences. Ten summer teacher industry internships provide opportunities for integrating applied experiences with both academic and career and technology curricula for teachers in the Central Texas region during the summer 2000. For 2001, plans are underway to greatly expand this effort. Internships through the High Tech Educators Network include curriculum development and peer learning components. Also, the Partnership and collaborators, particularly CATPC, CATF, the Chamber, ISD administrators and the Austin Software Council, helped to form the Austin Regional Industry Education Systems Alliance (ARIES). This industry/educator alliance is developing a pilot Information Technology (IT) curriculum sequence based industry-wide IT skills standards. Round Rock ISD will pilot the curriculum.

Ninety-seven students from three ISDs received academic credit for summer internships in the year 2000.[14] The issuance of credit was an issue for ISDs that the Texas Education

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[12] One school spokesperson felt that the Partnership invested extensively in implementing IACPs in the AISD, leaving smaller school districts with inadequate support.

[13] ISDs sent more than 10,000 career-oriented brochures from the "It's Your Life" series to parents. The series appears to be well regarded by educators.

[14] During the summer of 1999, 52 students qualified for academic credit.

Agency helped to resolve by authorizing Diversified Career Preparation credits (DCPs). A few ISDs chose not to issue DCPs as a "fairness issue," since they did not grant credit to Co-op students who worked during the summer. Among the 460 students for whom the CATF helped arrange summer work experience, 125 had a post-experience evaluation.

Table One.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Three Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
School-Based Learning Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Parental Consent for Substantive STC Participation	• ISDs assure Partnership that parental consent forms will be completed and sent to Partnership.	7 ISDs	7 ISDs	100 %
Elementary School Career Awareness	• CATF maintains a roster of 150 industry speakers for K-12 classes.	150 Speakers	250 Speakers	167 %
7th Grade and Up Career Awareness	• CATF organizes regional career fair for students, educators and employers.	5 ISDs 1500 Students 100 Employers	5 ISDs 2600 Students 100 Employers	100 % 173 % 100 %
Provision of Career Interest and Aptitude Materials	• Partnership provides ACT's Explore, Viesa, Plan and Discover materials to participating ISDs.	7 ISDs 13000 Students	7 ISDs 6865 Students	100 % 53 %
Provision of Career Exploration Software	• Partnership continues to provide ACT's Discover software high school career centers of participating ISDs.	7 ISDs	6 ISDs	86 %

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Integration of Career Awareness with Secondary and Postsecondary Curricula	• Partnership and collaborators (CATPC, ACC, ISDs, ARIES) prepared integrated curriculum w/industry validation in software/computer science for articulation agreement process.	4 ISDs 1 Postsecondary Institution	3 ISDs 3 Postsecondary Institution	75 % 300 %
	• Extend Individual Academic Career Plans to responsive ISDs.	4 ISDs	3 ISDs	75 %
Linking Academic and Vocational Curricula	• Provide summer internships with academic credit for students in career pathways.	3 ISDs 100 Students	4 ISDs 97 students	133 % 97 %
Implementing Student Skill Evaluations (Academic and Occupational)	• In addition to IACPs, summer student internships have formal evaluation of workplace knowledge and gaps	150 Students	125 Students	83 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers 99H2 Matrix 4.

One of the Partnership and CATF's objectives absent from the matrix is increasing student enrollment in career concentrations. The underlying argument is that enrollment in career concentrations and academies contribute to student performance in several ways, including reducing the dropout rate and increasing college enrollment.[15] The Partnership has consistently worked to improve and expand career concentrations at the five ISDs most active in STC activities, with some measure of success.

A thumbnail estimate by the Director of the Partnership suggests that there was nearly a 40 percent increase of students participating in career concentrations from Year Two to Year Three, excluding Austin ISD for which preliminary estimates were not available at

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[15] Hughes, Katherine, Thomas Bailey and Melinda Mechur. 2001. *School-to-Work: Making a Difference in Education.* (New York: Institute on Education and the Economy at Columbia University). Data on dropout prevention and postsecondary enrollment associated with STC are not available in Texas.

the time of this report.[16] The limited data available suggests that enrollment in electronics classes and career concentrations associated with the high tech sector varies across the region. Whereas some ISDs (e.g. Round Rock, Pflugerville, and Del Valle) have met enrollment expectations, others have not for a combination of reasons, including lack of student interest, lack of adequate student competency in math/science and teacher attrition.

During the last year, school-based activities in Central Texas appear to have taken a significant strategic shift.[17] Concern for weak math and science skills used to be articulated mainly in regard to proficiencies needed for success in the high tech sector. This knowledge gap was readily apparent as students moved through the Accelerated Careers in Electronics (ACE) program, a collaborative effort of the Semiconductor Executive Council, CATF, local ISDs and the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce (GACC). Now there appears to be increased recognition that math and science skills must be improved for *all* students, not just those in the high tech pipeline who need coursework to advance their preparedness within the industry cluster. At least two arguments support this approach. First, math and science proficiencies are necessary to grasp new technologies, which are increasingly essential across all sectors and occupations. Second, increasing proficiencies among all students enlarges the pool of all students who might pursue high tech careers.[18]

Work-Based Learning Activities

Key Work-Based Learning Activity objectives for Year Three were to measurably increase the number of internships, work-based learning and job shadowing opportunities available to high school and postsecondary students; increase the number of industry tours available to teachers and counselors; and make available a range of opportunities for employer engagement. The primary strategy to accomplish these objectives was to increase employer involvement in the ISSCs and the career fair in order to facilitate contact between employers and educators.

As Table Two indicates, the Partnership through CATF surpassed performance targets for almost every objective. Educators participated in industry visits at much higher rates than anticipated. Student participation more than tripled in the "Ground Hog Day" job shadowing event, a collaborative effort coordinated by CATF, Junior Achievement and Manor High School.

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[16] Accurate regional data are not available due to collection irregularities at some schools and ISDs.

[17] The Year One and Two evaluation of the Partnership found a prevailing concern for addressing high tech student and teacher bottlenecks; this seems to have diminished somewhat in the past year, perhaps reflecting commitment to the new strategic approach.

[18] Round Rock ISD has committed to the integration of advanced technology applications throughout its K-12 curricula.

Table Two.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Three Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
Work-Based Learning Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Work Site Visits (Educators)	• Teachers, counselors and administrators visit semi-conductor and other high-tech firms	6 ISDs 15 Educators 3 Employers	4 ISDs 75 Educators 4 Employers	67 % 500 % 133 %
	• Four Accelerated Careers in Electronics (ACE) visits to AMD, Samsung, Applied Materials and SEMATECH.	6 ISDs 25 Educators 4 Employers	4 ISDs 75 Educators 4 Employers	67 % 300 % 100 %
Worksite Job-Shadowing by Individual Students	• CATF supports "Ground Hog Day" job-shadowing.	100 Students	325 Students	325 %
Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences/ Student Internships	• CATF works w/ ISDs and employers to provide internships and industry rotations.	4 ISDs 350 Students	4 ISDs 460 Students	100 % 131 %
Quality Work-Based Learning Experiences/ Jobs for Secondary Cooperative Education Students	• CATF works w/ instructors to identify employers with career-related jobs.	50 Educators	75 Educators	150 %
Identify and Market Work-Based Learning Opportunities	• CATF expanded from 5 to 7 industry clusters with which staff work to identify work-based learning experiences.	50 Students 15 Employers	423 Students 61 Employers	846 % 407 %

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Provision of Work-Based Counseling	• CATF provide pre-employment workshops for summer interns and placements.	75 Students 15 Employers	400 Students 75 Employers	533 % 500 %
Provision of Work-Based Mentoring	• CATF includes mentoring as a key component of summer internships.	100 Students 15 Employers	125 Students 61 Employers	125 % 407 %
Provision of Job Rotation Opportunities	• CATF continues to support job rotations as a key component of the hospitality and health sciences career pathways	5 ISDs 200 Students	4 ISDs 220 Students	75 % 110 %
Industry Participation in Career Concentration Validation	• CATF works w/CATPC, ACC and employers to develop K-14 concentrations in Software and Health Sciences and prepare curriculum for articulation agreement processing.	3 ISDs 15 Employers	3 ISDs 9 Employers	100 % 60 %
Providing Employers a Continuum of Participation Options	• CATF industry liaisons provide range of participation options.	300 Employers	434 Employers	145 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers 99H2 Matrix 4.

CATF also worked to increase work-based experiences for students by helping 460 students find summer employment, 423 of these within industries clusters served by CATF industry liaisons. Additionally, CATF provided training to more than 75 City of Austin/Travis County Summer Youth Program supervisors who led interviewing and resume writing—"charm school"—seminars in local high schools. CATF also recruited Co-op instructors to participate in industry tours, ISSC meetings and the career fair to provide them better access to employers.

Industry validation efforts led to a certification of the hospitality curriculum through the Austin Hotel/Motel Association.[19] Curriculum certification efforts continue in several pathways, including electronics, health sciences, automotive technology and information technology. ARIES Alliance support for a skill standards-based IT curriculum is a particularly promising development. Several local high schools are pursuing National Automotive Technology Education Facility (NATEF) certification. Employer participation in curriculum validation efforts, as well as ISSC participation was below target levels, but has reportedly been increasing. Expectations are high regarding the IT curriculum the ARIES Alliance is developing, and Round Rock ISD will pilot the curriculum.

The Partnership and CATF conscientiously attempt to provide a continuum of employer participation opportunities. Employers are regularly recruited to volunteer as speakers, serve as job shadow host, sponsor teacher and student industry visits, become a career fair exhibitor, provide internships and join the ISSC.

Connecting Activities

Key Connecting Activity objectives for Year Three in the reporting matrix included strengthening ties with and building upon the success of the CATPC; developing and deepening linkages between institutions and curricula; increasing and improving professional development opportunities for teachers; increasing employer participation in ISSCs; and developing and strengthening a marketing strategy. Table Three indicates that the Partnership met many of these objectives, but did not do well eliciting the participation of more employers in ISSCs and teachers in career development opportunities.

The degree to which the latter shortcoming may be cause for concern is debatable. The authority borne by the representative, as well as the depth and continuity of participation, are as important as or more so than the number of individual employers participating in the sector groups. The Austin Area Semiconductor Executive Council and the ARIES Alliance represent high profile corporate commitments to STC activities, which in turn helps to marshal resources and support from the private and public sector. Senior administrators for major health care providers in Central Texas have taken leading roles in the Health Industry Steering Committee, yet the committee still deems it necessary to broaden and deepen employer participation through outreach efforts. Moreover to the extent possible, the ISSCs try to enlist business and professional associations to participate. The Central Texas Automotive Careers Council (CTACC) has been particularly effective in this regard and has engaged the Austin Automobile Dealers Association (AADA), Texas Independent Automobile Association (TIAA), Automotive Service Professionals (ASP) and Automotive Wholesalers of Texas (AWOT). CTACC membership now generates more than $50,000 annually for operations and projects.

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[19] Unfortunately, student interest in this pathway has fallen off, and three high schools are terminating the program.

Table Three.
Capital Area Education and Careers Partnership
Year Three Performance Objectives and Outcomes:
Connecting Activities

Objective	Activity Description	Performance Target	Performance Achievement	Performance Ratio
Building Upon Existing Tech Prep Initiatives	• The Partnership, CATPC, and collaborators combine TEKS, WECM and software industry input to prepare integrated curriculum in software/computer sciences for articulation agreement processing.	300 Employers	434 Employers	145 %
Supporting Adopt-a-School Initiative	• The Partnership works with Austin Partners in Education to increase the number of school mentors who help pathway students.	2000 Students	2500 Students	125 %
Supporting Linkages between Institutions and Curricula/ Secondary to Postsecondary.	• The Partnership, CATPC, and collaborators prepared the software/computer sciences curricula for articulation. Project is a state model supported by TEA and NSE.	4 ISDs 1 Postsecondary Institution	3 ISDs 3 Postsecondary Institution	75 % 300 %

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Supporting Linkages between Institutions and Curricula/ Postsecondary to Postsecondary.	• The Partnership, CATPC, and collaborators encouraged ACC articulation agreements w/ SWTSU, SEU and HT; TAMU pending.	3 Postsecondary Institution	3 Postsecondary Institution	100 %
Supporting Linkages between Institutions and Curricula/ Secondary to Employers.	• The Partnership/ CATF helped to acquire validation for the electronics and hospitality curriculum.	4 ISDs 25 Employers	4 ISDs 20 Employers	100 % 80 %
Provision of Professional Development Opportunities for Teachers	• The Partnership/ CATF supported four professional development sessions for math, science and technology teachers.	6 ISDs 60 Educators 4 Employers	4 ISDs 40 Educators 2 Employers	67 % 67 % 50 %
Increase Employer Participation in Industry Steering Committees.	• More than 400 employers are active in STC, but a smaller share is active in ISSCs.	300 Employers 7 Industries	101 Employers 7 Industries	34 % 100 %
Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/ Radio and TV Spots	• CATF secured substantial radio and TV coverage for region wide career fair.	5 ISDs 1500 Students 100 Employers	5 ISDs 2600 Students 100 Employers	100 % 173 % 100 %
Implementation of Communication and Information Strategies/ Brochures, Pamphlets, Posters	• Partnership replaced brochures with career orientation descriptive inserts in *Austin American Statesman* (local newspaper). Extra copies distributed at schools.	5 ISDs	0 ISDs	0 %

Source: Texas Workforce Commission. Texas School-to-Careers 99H2 Matrix 4.

Professional development opportunities for teachers supported by the Partnership also fell short of expectations. Nevertheless, these activities represent a respectable start and were well received by teachers who participated. CATF helped to arrange two three-day professional development events attended by 38 teachers at AMD and Samsung, as well as activities at Applied Materials, Cypress Semiconductor, Tokyo Electron and AMD that involved more than 75 science and math teachers. Another 30 educators participated in "Teachers Teaching with Technology" (T3), hosted by Manor ISD, which addressed ways to introduce instruction technology in math and science education.

CATF plans to expand these and summer professional internships during the summer of 2001. The High Tech Educators Network, another recent Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium (CATPC) /CATF initiative, is currently organizing a series of industry-based seminars that will be followed by summer educator internships. Teacher response may exceed capacity: more than 240 instructors in Round Rock ISD alone have expressed interest for an estimated 40-80 slots in the Central Texas region.

Since its inception the Partnership has worked closely with the Tech Prep consortium and it continues to do so regularly, particularly to complete articulation procedures between career pathway curricula and postsecondary accreditation. Austin Partners in Education, which coordinates the Adopt-a-School program and is part of the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, apparently has been successful at helping CATF identify mentors for career pathway students.

Other Project Activities

The Partnership and CATF have provided direct and indirect support for three other projects in Travis County. The Telecommunity Partnership Initiative at Travis High School (Austin AISD), currently known as the Community Technology and Training Center (CTTC), provides access to computer training for students, out-of-school youth and local families, many of whom are low-income. Classes range from the introduction to the keyboard to advanced programming. The *Austin American Statesman* reported that 750 individuals have received training at the CTTC to date and that the training has helped 100 of them find a job or a better job.[20] Representatives from the school, Austin ISD, City of Austin, CATF, community members and other collaborators inaugurated a second CTTC at Reagan High School (also Austin AISD) in February 2001.

The CATF continues to operate the Gateway Construction program at Austin Community College; the Partnership helped to plan and coordinate, as well as fund the project's start-up. Gateway provides a five-week curriculum that introduces participants to the skill sets of occupations in the building trades. The project serves primarily incarcerated youth and unemployed adults with barriers to work. The transitional pre-employment and job-readiness services at Gateway prepare participants for entry-level jobs in the building trades and apprenticeship programs. CATF staff and ACC instructors conduct nine classes annually that graduate approximately 100 students. Gateway reportedly has an

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[20] *Austin American Statesman*. February 22, 2001. P. 1.

83-85 percent placement rate among graduates. Most of the current funding now comes from county and city government. CATF coordinates the project, which draws cash and in-kind support from the city, school district, business and federal grants.

CATF is also part of a consortium, which includes Goodwill Industries, American Youth Works, Communities-in-Schools and the Urban League, that formed to implement the Youth Employment Project (YEP). YEP helps at-risk and out-of-school youth complete their education and prepare for the workforce. CATF helps participants transition into STC activities. Major support comes from the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) Title I Youth funds administered by the CAWDB.

III. Progress and Challenges

Progress

The Partnership's activities have supported its mission to "provide students with a foundation of academic/career knowledge and skills" and to forge "active partnerships among education, business, industry, labor, government and community organizations" to achieve its objectives.[21] During its third year of operation, the Partnership has continued to build and expand upon accomplishments of its first two years. Specifically, the Partnership has:

- Surpassed or made significant progress towards the attainment of objectives in the major STC program areas (School-based Learning Activities/Career Awareness, Work-based Learning Activities and Connecting Activities).

- Continued to develop an array of Industry Sector Steering Committees (ISSCs) and other intermediaries that link employers and educators through its support for the Capital Area Training Foundation (CATF). Through these intermediaries, CATF has directed the STC effort toward a concrete package of STC activities (speakers, internships, career fairs, etc.) that can be delivered systematically and regionally.

- Made progress towards the sustainability of the STC effort. Schools and independent school districts (ISDs) have been strengthening career pathways and academies. The Partnership's support for CATF industry liaisons has helped to strengthen and expand private sector employer commitment to Industry Sector Steering Committees and their financial support for operational and program expenditures. Ongoing projects have expanded their funding base to include city, county, school district, foundation and federal dollars.

- Helped to plan, coordinate and strengthen student and instructor appreciation for "real world" math and science applications, notably through summer student internships and summer professional development workshops for educators that help instructors integrate work-based experiences into their curricula.

- Expanded the reach of its STC activities across grade levels to more effectively reach primary school students, as well as postsecondary students. The "If I Had a Hammer" program, approved late in the Third Year, brought applied learning experiences to youngsters, reportedly strengthening their awareness of the importance of math. The Health Industry Sector Committee began the groundwork for "Get Ahead in Nursing" (GAIN), a program that provides paid summer internships for student nurses.

- Continued to promote regional, collaborative approaches among STC partners in Central Texas. Collaborators include employers and employer associations, local

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[21] Article I of the *Travis County School-To-Work Partnership By-Laws* (August 1997).

school districts, Austin Community College and other postsecondary institutes, the Capital Area Tech Prep Consortium (CATPC), the Capital Area Training Foundation (CATF), the Rural Capital Area School-to-Career Partnership (RCASTC), the Capital Area Workforce Development Board (CAWDB), the Rural Capital Area Workforce Development Board (RCAWDB), the Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce, and local city and county governments.

Challenges

Despite these accomplishments, the STC Partnership faces continuous challenges to its efforts. Some of these are structural and beyond the capacity of the Partnership alone to address. For example, the Partnership can do little about the fragmentation of administrative oversight and categorical funding for workforce, education and economic development among state and federal agencies or changes in political regimes at the state or national level and other large scale environmental influences. Other challenges are operational and more immediate like negotiating policy and establishing structures for managing for-credit summer student internships. These operational challenges that the Partnership and collaborators can address, remove or at least mitigate include the:[22]

- **The disconnect between academic core classes and career and technology classes.** The residual vocational education vs. academic tracking mentality and its parallel—the tracking of college-bound and non-college-bound students—persists in among many ISDs, administrators, instructors, parents and students in Central Texas.

- **Recruitment and retention of certified, skilled instructors.** Qualified teachers, particularly in Austin's tight labor and inflated real estate/housing markets of the Austin area face tough opportunity cost decisions. Salaries of certified instructors compare very unfavorably with private sector rates. Many teachers in Austin work second jobs to make ends meet.

- **Weak student proficiencies in math and science**. Math and science proficiencies are prerequisites for educational success as well as career advancement that many Central Texas students reportedly lack. Too many students are unable to successfully participate in advanced classes or make the transition from secondary to postsecondary course requirements, particularly, but not limited to, those related to the high tech sector. Closely related to this is the ongoing challenge for ISDs and instructors to integrate the use of technology in curricula.

- **Absence of an adequate automated information management system to monitor student participation in career pathways and track outcomes.** Data concerning both participation in and outcomes from STC activities and services remain inadequate or altogether lacking at the local, state and national level. For example,

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[22] The Partnership operates primarily in a planning and coordination mode with a volunteer Director and a part-time Administrative Assistant. Its capacity for progress depends on collaboration. Many of these challenges require the will and capacity of the much more powerful and resourceful local ISDs and schools.

while Partnership staff is aware of numerous career pathway students in the area ISDs, available data are inconsistent. Nor is it possible with existing information systems and performance management tools to track subsequent postsecondary or labor market experiences for participating youth.

- **Diversified and stable funding to continue STC activities**. The sustainability of STC activities depends on obtaining resource commitments for STC activities from school districts, employers, other government funding streams, foundations and other sources to replace funds that will no longer be available when the federal STC grant expires in September 2002.

The presence and depth of these challenges varies among the Partnership's collaborators. For example, Round Rock ISD is already committed to integrating applied technology with curricula throughout its entire K-12 system. Weak student math and science proficiencies also vary significantly. Reportedly this condition is much more of a challenge among the lower-income population of the Austin ISD.

IV. Operational Recommendations and Concluding Observation

Recommendations

The Partnership and CATF have a highly professional, competent staff who recognize the continuing challenges posed by STC and are already working in collaboration with a broad range of individuals and entities to sustain and improve operations. Administrators and staff know that a systems-building effort like STC is complicated and time consuming because of the highly varied events, actors and processes involved. The evaluation of Year One and Year Two activities offered broader recommendations for actions regarding strategy, system-building, sustainability, and accountability/continuous improvement and discussed.[23] The report discussed these in the context of changing labor markets and rapid technology developments that remain pertinent to STC in and beyond Central Texas. Year Three recommendations are limited to operational challenges that prevailed during the recent round of interviews. They all could largely be huddled under a single umbrella recommendation—that the Partnership should continue to function in its planning, coordination and support capacity in order to expand and improve the current range of STC activities and its network of collaborators. Under that umbrella, several more specific recommendations are offered for the Partnership's priority consideration during the remaining months of federal STC funding.

- **The Partnership should continue working to reduce the divide between academic core/college orientations and career and technology tracking.**

The lack of consistent understanding and support for STC goals and benefits across ISDs and among parents, teachers and students, is perhaps the largest barrier to systemic advancement. The Partnership should continue to communicate the positive outcomes of STC participation regarding grade improvements, high school completion and college enrollment.[24] This information does not seem to have filtered through the tiers and silos of K-12 education in the Austin area. Technical skill training in career concentrations does not exclude college participation and can provide a skills safety net for the sixty or seventy percent of all college students who never complete their degree. Furthermore, to the extent that STC activities bring together students with different abilities and background, STC serves as a vehicle for "detracking" students, rather than "tracking" students, as some critics fear.

The Partnership could incorporate this "signaling" campaign as part of its present marketing efforts, and as part of the billboard and website campaign for summer internships that the CATF is preparing to launch for the summer student internship project. School districts could help by reducing distinctions between academic core faculty and career and technology faculty. By making summer internships available to

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[23] O'Shea and King (2000), *op. cit.*

[24] U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Labor, *Implementation of the School-to-Work Opportunities Act: Joint Report to Congress* (Washington, D.C.: School-to-Work Office, 1999). See also Hughes, et al. op. cit.

both academic and career and technology teachers, the Partnership, CATF and CATPC have already begun to provide applied experiences that can become a basis for linking work, academic proficiencies and technology across curricula.

- **The Partnership should continue to promote strategies that help school districts recruit and retain certified, skilled instructors.**

From a practical perspective, it seems unlikely that recruitment and retention of a selected subset of teachers can be separated from the much larger issue of economic equity for all teachers. The Partnership already supports financial and educational incentives such as paid summer internships that keep instructors abreast of latest technologies and help to make their salaries more competitive. For the immediate future, the Partnership should continue to promote additional creative approaches. Large corporations can help alleviate the immediate shortfall by granting paid sabbaticals for employees who are also skilled instructors and have a desire to teach. Other suggestions rendered during the field work included recruitment/signing bonuses (possibly provided by school-based foundations), weighted consideration for merit increases, housing subsidies and extended contract days.

- **The Partnership should continue to promote the development of an automated information management system to monitor student participation in career pathways and track outcomes.**

The Partnership has recognized the importance of comprehensive performance measurement and management approaches since its inception. Beginning Year Three, the TWC planning and reporting matrix has provided a range of process measures for continuous improvement and performance measurement regarding key annual objectives. Nevertheless, effective accountability is not yet possible regarding many processes such as pathways enrollment and articulated credits earned. Nor are means and measures yet available regarding key STC outcomes regarding high school graduation, drop-out prevention, continuing postsecondary education, employment patterns and earnings.

The Partnership should support state level action to support these automated information needs. Career Development Resources (CDR), formerly known as the State Occupational Information Coordinating Committee, may serve as the conduit for systematically extracting data elements from the automated databases of the state agencies supported by CDR, including the Texas Workforce Commission, the Texas Education Agency, and the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

There is also no procedure or automated system to aggregate and assess the outcomes of the student summer internship evaluations. The Partnership should work immediately to develop procedures and capacity to analyze summer evaluations. Doing so would help to validate and to market the summer internship experience.[25]

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[25] The emerging GAIN program for nurse postecondary student internships plans not only to evaluate the individual experiences, but also will ask supervisors to compare the performance of GAIN graduates with non-GAIN graduates.

- **The Partnership should continue to expand and improve the student summer internship program.**

The Partnership should continue to engage employers, educators and students in this important activity. To do so, the Partnership and CATF should revisit three inter-related aspects of the student internship. First, the Partnership should address the "creeping" blur that threatens to mask the difference between summer internships and summer jobs. The Partnership has developed quality internships that included pre-requisite course-work, enrollment in a career concentration, parental approval, a summer learning plan, mentorship and a post-experience evaluation. Moreover through this joint initiative, the Partnership, CATF, TEA and cooperative ISDs have negotiated and implemented procedures for securing academic credit for these internships. Many of last summer's placements did not meet these criteria, but did provide work experience for youth, mostly in priority industry sectors. The extent to which summer placement activities appear more like job brokerage services, rather than as high quality internship opportunities, may become a divisive issue between educators and the CATF.

Second, the Partnership should renew its commitment to academic credit. Differential commitment on the part of area ISDs is a barrier to a regional approach and a management issue. On the one hand, the availability of credit helps to validate the experience for both employers and educators. On the other, implementation is more difficult because of individual variance among students and ISDs.

Third, the Partnership should revisit the structure and scope of oversight provided by summer internship coordinators. Reportedly, assigning caseloads geographically and accurate identification of for-credit, non-credit and regular job placements presented management challenges.

- **The Partnership should act as a catalyst for a strong and active Youth Council as a basis of improving youth services, and identifying and securing diversified and stable funding to continue supporting STC activities.**

The Partnership is uniquely positioned to carve an institutional niche in the local workforce development network by using part of its remaining lifeline to take a leading role in the development and direction of the Youth Council mandated by the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. By law, the Youth Council is a standing committee of the Local Workforce Development Board charged with coordinating youth activities of the area's major stakeholders committed to nurturing successful livelihoods for young people. Minimally, the Council is required to plan workforce services for youth, select providers and negotiate local performance standards. A more aggressive and progressive Council can serve as a platform to market youth challenges and successful paths to overcome them, to leverage funds, to enhance collaboration and to set policies aimed at continuously improving youth education and career prospects.

The Council provides the Partnership a forum for continuing joint dialogue and effort long beyond the approaching lapse of federal STC funding. Through this structure and the administrative funds available to the Youth Council, intermediaries, educators,

employers, community members and other collaborators can more thoroughly engage agencies and resources that may help continue STC.

Through the Youth Council, goals and objectives of STC could be institutionalized as important youth-oriented components of a comprehensive workforce development system. The Council can continue the regional collaborative approach fostered and practiced by the Partnership, as well as its support for students, dropouts and at-risk students. Additional resources can be leveraged from several aligned public funding sources including major streams like Pell Grants, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), WIA Youth, and Welfare-to-Work formula (especially state discretionary funds) and competitive grants. To these could be added state and local resources for summer employment, juvenile justice and special projects (e.g., Capital Idea, a community-based initiative that provides career advancement opportunities for low-income families in Austin). The Council could receive foundation and private support for its activities as well. State legislation continuing TWC and other agency support for STC activities would also help.

Final Observations

The Capital Area Education and Career Partnership is at the forefront of STC efforts across the nation in many important respects, ranging from its industry-led, career concentration approach to its notable level of support among its partners.[26] The planning and coordination efforts of the Partnership and CATF have helped schools, employers, government and community leaders to collectively marshal their energies and resources to help youth improve their chances of a secure and satisfying future. Much remains to be accomplished, particularly to motivate and enlist the support of students, parents and the general public for the goals of the education and career partnership. Opportunity must be available for demographic sectors with weak attachments to the career requirements and opportunities in a "New Economy" that is globally interdependent and driven by developments in information and related technologies.[27]

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[26] For an in-depth explanation of the origins, accomplishments and lessons learned from Austin's STC efforts, see Robert W. Glover, *Engaging Industry in Building School-to-Career Opportunities: Lessons to Date from the Experience in Austin, Texas* (Berkeley, CA: National Center for the Workplace, Working Paper #11, October 1996).

[27] For more on this issue, see Ray Marshall (ed.), *Back to Shared Prosperity: The Growing Inequality of Wealth and Income in America* (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2000).

Attachment A

Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP)
Formal Contacts/Interview List

CAECP Evaluation
Formal Contact/Interview List

Bob Rutishauser, Director, CAECP. Rnd. 1, 2
John Fitzpatrick, Executive Director, CATF. (Also, Greater Austin Chamber of Commerce-GACC) Rnd. 1, 2
Rip Rowan, Education/Workforce Development Manager, CATF. Rnd. 1, 2
Mary Dodd, Senior Coordinator, CATF (Health Sciences Liaison). Rnd. 1, 2
Jim McClure, HTEN, Professional Development, CATF. (Technology Industry Liaison), Rnd. 1, 2
Tom Serafin, Program Coordinator – Construction Gateway, CATF. Rnd. 1, 2
Silvester Villareal, Instructor, – Construction Gateway, CATF. Rnd. 1
Kathleen Littlepage, Industry Liaison, CATF (Hospitality, Retail and Travel). Rnd. 1
Teresa Van Deusen, Industry Liaison. CATF (Automotive and Construction Industries Liaison). Rnd. 2
Allyson Peerman, Corporate Manager Community Affairs, AMD/Semiconductor. Rnd. 1
Susan Hershey, Economic Development Director, GACC. Rnd. 1.
Louis Malfaro, Co-President, Education Austin, Rnd. 2.
Gilbert Ferrales, Training Director, IBEW/Austin Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee for the Electric Industry. Rnd. 1, 2
Bruce Wilson, Training Coordinator, Sheet Metal Workers, Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee. Rnd. 1
John Blazier, Attorney, Blazier, Christenson & Bigelow, P.C. Rnd. 1
Kathey Gillespie, ABC-Central Texas. Rnd. 1
Dick Pierce, Senior Coordinator, American Youthworks. Rnd. 1
Wayne Zwicke, BW Consolidated, Inc. Rnd. 1
Dr. Floyd Bevers, Career & Technology Director, Del Valle ISD. Rnd. 1, 2
Gary Madsen, Director, Career & Technology Education, Round Rock ISD. Rnd 1, 2
Sharyl Kincaid, Director of School-to-Career and Technology Education, Round Rock ISD. Rnd 1
Gerry Elmore, Career and Technology Coordinator/Career Counselor, Manor ISD. Rnd. 2
Susan Euresti, Career and Technology Coordinator, Westlake High School/ Eanes ISD. Rnd. 1
Jerome Hurt, Director, School-to-Career, Austin ISD. Rnd. 2
Pat Bell, Career Specialist, School-to-Career, Austin ISD. Rnd. 2
Randy Strickland, Coordinator of Special Areas, Pflugerville ISD. Rnd. 1
Clyde Read, Instructor, Electronics/ Principles of Technology, John B. Connally High School/ Pflugerville ISD. Rnd. 1, 2
Rick Salvo, Instructor, John B. Connally High School/ Pflugerville ISD. Rnd. 1

Attachment B

Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP)
Year 3 Evaluation
Interview Guide

Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP)
Year 3 Evaluation
Interview Guide

Dan O'Shea and Chris King from the Ray Marshall Center for the Study of Human Resources, a research unit of the LBJ School of Public Affairs at The University of Texas-Austin, are conducting an evaluation of "School-to-Career" activities and services supported by the efforts of the Capital Area Education and Career Partnership (CAECP). CAECP receives an allocation of federal funds administered by the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) which is used to help plan, coordinate and fund (through contracts) activities that bring together students, families, educators and employers in Travis County. CAECP is currently in the fourth year of a five-year grant cycle. TWC required an independent evaluation of Year Three (September 1, 1999 through August 31, 2000) activities as part of the Year Four grant. This evaluation will enable CAECP to meet that obligation.

(Ed = Educators, Emp = Employers, Inter = Intermediary/linking groups)

I. Introduction (ALL)
Name:

Title:

Institutional Affiliation:

Principal function in School-to-Career efforts:

II. Goals and Objectives (ALL)
Thinking broadly from your perspective with the (institutional association), what are the most important goals of the STC partnership in Travis County?

How successful was the Partnership at getting done what it set out to do?

In what area was STC Partnership more successful? Why

In what areas was the STC Partnership less successful? Why?

To what extent have STC activities in recent years helped to improve the school experience of students as related to careers? Explain.

To what extent have STC activities in recent years helped to expand and improve work-based learning opportunities for students? Explain.

To what extent have STC activities in recent years helped to build stronger relationships between employers and educators? Explain.

III. STC Activities

Acting in its planning and coordination mode, CAECP has supported Career Awareness, School-based Activities, Work-based Activities and Connecting Activities. The Partnership added Sustaining Activities to its activity list for Year Three.

(ALL) What are the principal STC activities that you have been DIRECTLY involved with?

Career Awareness

School-based Activities

Work-based Activities

Connecting Activities

Sustaining Activities

What are the major accomplishments of these activities in the past year?

What have been the major constraints?

(ED) Are Individual Academic Career Plans (IACPs) used as part of your STC activities? How widely is it used and how effective is it as a career guidance instrument?

(ED, Intermediary) Is the Greater Austin Job Network successfully providing career information to students? What other LMI tools are available in Travis County?

(All) During the Spring/Summer 2000 CATF launched a major effort to link students and employers through summer internships. Did the effort meet its objectives?

(All) CAECP also helped to develop the "Summer Internship Performance Indicators." How were these used to measure student performance?

IV. Resources and Resource Allocation Patterns (ALL)

What types of activities did resources made available to you under the STC grant directly support, if any?

Would you have been involved in these activities without the Partnership's support?

What resources has your (institutional association) provided to STC efforts?

To what extent did you "package" a variety of resources to support your efforts? Comment.

Will you be able to continue your STC efforts after the federal grant expires? Explain.

V. Partnerships/ Collaborative Configurations (All)

Whom would you identify as the key collaborators in the Travis County STC Partnership?

Whom did you work most closely with?

What were the strengths of your collaboration?

What were the weaknesses of your collaboration?

Given the range of collaborators, activities and available resources, do you think that STC in Central Texas is becoming more "systemic" and sustainable ?

VI. Recruitment/Retention in Career Concentrations (Ed)

Has the number and type of Career Concentrations changed during the last year? Identify new or defunct Career Concentrations.

What is role of CAECP and CATF in developing and maintaining Career Concentrations?

What is the role of the employer community in developing and maintaining Career Concentrations?

How does a school/ISD decide to develop a Career Concentration? Terminate one?

Briefly explain how students get information about and access to Career Concentrations.

Do recruitment and retention of students for Career Concentrations pose challenges? What recommendations do you have to improve these processes?

Have you observed any difficulties recruiting and retaining instructors for Career Concentrations? Does this vary by subject?

What recommendations do you have to improve recruitment and retention of instructors?

VII. Recruitment/Retention in Industry Sector Steering Committees (Intermediaries)

Has the number and type of ISSCs changed during the last year? Identify new or defunct ISSCs.

What is the role of CAECP and CATF in developing and maintaining ISSCs? Has the role of CAECP and CATF in developing and maintaining ISSCs changed during the last year? Explain.

How does your (do) Industry Steering Committees (s) recruit educators, trainers and employers?

Do you consider it desirable to expand participation? What recommendations do you have for improving recruitment/expanding participation?

To what extent have employers become involved by making internship and employment opportunities available? How does this vary by size or sector or other variables?

What are the major accomplishments of your (the) ISSC (s) in the past year?

What are the major constraints?

What recommendations to you have to overcome these?

What activities have helped to make your (the) ISSCs financially stable?

To what extent are employers contributing? What has worked well and what hasn't? Why?

VIII. Outcomes (All)

How have students benefited from the STC Partnership? How do you measure these benefits?

How have employers benefited from the STC Partnership? How do you measure these benefits?

How have schools and educators benefitted from STC efforts? How do you measure these benefits?

In what other ways do we as a society benefit from the efforts of the STC partnership?

How might any or all of these benefits be sustained or expanded in future years?

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